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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, AMBASSADOR GARDNER'S RESIDENCE,
ROME, ITALY

September 4, 1968, 1:50 p.m.

ARGENTINE SIDE

President Jorge Rafael Videla
Col. Miguel A. Mallea Gil
Dr. Ricardo Yofre

U.S. SIDE

Vice President Walter F. Mondale
A. Denis Clift
Anthony J. Hervas, Interpreter

The Vice President opened saying he was pleased to have the pleasure of the meeting. He recalled the meeting with Videla in the White House at the time of the Panama Canal Treaty ceremony. He said we want good relations but there are strains now -- human rights are a central concern. He added that he would report to the President personally on Videla's views.

President Videla thanked the Vice President for the meeting -- an extremely important opportunity to discuss these matters because he feels our relations are deteriorating. He fully concurs with President Carter's position on human rights. Argentina has belief in the democratic process so that men can live with dignity and freedom. He said Argentina is with the United States and not troubled by criticism when it is objective. However, he is concerned by attitudes projecting intervention in domestic affairs. He spoke with President Carter about this at the time of the Panama Canal Treaty signing, but since that time he has had to delay announcement of an invitation to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights because of U.S. criticisms projecting intervention.

A second problem -- Argentine politicians were invited to visit the United States, but they, too, did not visit because of the U.S. statements intervening in our affairs. Mrs. Darien's statements are contributing to a deterioration in our relations.

The Vice President asked if these were statements made in Argentina or in Washington.

President Videla said in Washington before Congress. He said the western world must be united, and the United States must lead the western world. At the same time, the people of Argentina cannot tolerate intervention. This is his concern.

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The Vice President said we want to work with you to have good relations. The Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment is coming into effect. We must soon take decisions on the Allis-Chalmers deal. We want to be helpful. It would be important if Videla could have the Inter-American Human Rights Commission received in Argentina on terms acceptable to the commission. We would not link Argentine actions with our own.

The Vice President added that the U.S. press covers developments in Argentina closely. There are certain human rights cases with the people known to the press -- people such as Jacobo Timerman. To the extent that Videla makes progress on these cases, it will help us to make progress.

Videla said he understood, and government-to-government relations are not easy. His concern is when a problem is raised to the level of a public or popular issue. This leads to situations where Argentine citizens adopt partisan positions against the United States, to situations where Argentine businessmen adopt partisan positions because they cannot conclude deals when Ex-Im does not grant a loan.

The Vice President repeated that it was important to put our relations on a more positive course. He suggested that it would be good if Assistant Secretary Vaky could come to Argentina to meet with Videla or with a person of his choice for a review of our relations. Videla asked if this would be after the Inter-American Commission or before. The Vice President said he thought it should be as soon as possible. Videla said perhaps he could arrange a visit by the Commission by mid-October. The Vice President asked if he could announce the visit earlier.

Videla then said he would like to point out that since the meeting at the Panama Canal signing, there have been a series of events showing the efforts on the part of the Argentine government:

- they have issued a list and names of all the detained;
- they have published a list of all of those who disappeared and then reappeared;
- last Christmas they released approximately 500;
- this last week, 65 individuals were freed;
- they have indicated that they are prepared to give a favorable response to the Commission on Human Rights;
- Timerman's situation has changed; he is now out of jail and under house arrest;

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-- Professor Bravo is now under house arrest and they expect the court to lessen the charges against him.

He said officials of the U.S. government are welcome in Argentina, but they cannot give the impression that they are coming to inspect Argentina.

The Vice President said Mr. Vaky was a man of experience and would exercise discretion. He said it will be important to have the announcement on a visit by the Human Rights Commission on the terms acceptable to the Commission.

Videla said he we could have done so last month, but Mrs. Darien's statement before the Congress forced him to suspend the announcement. In the course of a few days, he believed he could develop a satisfactory announcement.

Mr. Clift said that in considering the announcement, it is important to remember the timing in the United States. The Ex-Im Bank must take its decision by September 15. The Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment comes into effect on October 1. The Vice President said we would hope the announcement could be taken care of before then. He said this might enable us to move on the Ex-Im letter before the 15th deadline. Videla said this was his intention. He did not think it could be done, however, before September 15.

The Vice President said we are encouraged that you will receive the Commission. Will you authorize me to tell the President that this will be done. Videla said yes. The Vice President asked when Assistant Secretary Vaky may come. Videla said after his announcement on the commission. He said he would prefer to have Vaky to visit Argentina alone. The Vice President said he wouldn't give a yes on this, but he would recommend it. Videla asked if the U.S. will let him know ahead of time what Vaky's mission will be to permit him to prepare for it. The Vice President said we would communicate this.

President Videla observed that US-Argentine relations proceed in multiple channels -- economic, political, cultural. Now our relations are focused solely on human rights. He said he can understand this problem if it is addressed in the broader spectrum of our overall relations and is not the single focus.

The Vice President said that if we can get on the road to progress in human rights, this whole other vista will open. He said he thought we are now at a point where we can turn the right way.

Videla said "I think we can. Mr. Vice President, I know your time was limited. I appreciate this meeting. Please give my greetings and best wishes to President Carter."

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Carter lib

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VP visit to Rome & Vatican, 9/2/78 - 9/4/78: Background